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Research

Collaboration in a polarized context: lessons from public forest governance in the American West

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ABSTRACT. Collaborative governance has proliferated as a strategy to engage stakeholders in the complexity of environmental problems. However, collaboration has limitations, and increasing political polarization in many places could impact the ability to bring diverse stakeholders together. This research is a case study of collaboration in a public forest planning context facing social and political polarization in the American West. An alternate group formed, which reduced effectiveness of the collaboration and ultimately derailed the policy process. Using participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document review, we identify trade-offs and discuss lessons that inform the design and implementation of collaborative governance regimes. We highlight the vulnerability of local collaboration to political shifts at other scales of government but also show how key collaboration dynamics related to facilitation, structure, representation, and shared learning interact with a polarized context to impact the trajectory of collaborative governance regimes.

Key Words: *collaborative governance; environmental conflict; forest governance; polarization*

INTRODUCTION

The complexity of environmental problems requires effective and innovative governance arrangements that meaningfully engage stakeholders (Ostrom 2010). Over the past 30 years, collaborative approaches proliferated as a promising tool to engage multiple parties and to overcome conflict (Benson et al. 2013, Bodin 2017). A substantial body of work shows that collaboration done well can be more democratic, efficient, and effective than centralized or top-down approaches (Emerson and Nabatchi 2015). Collaboration also offers an opportunity for deliberative democracy and social learning that can have positive societal outcomes beyond a specific policy process (Pahl-Wostl 2006, Brummel et al. 2010, Emerson et al. 2012).

However, collaboration is time intensive, can lead to lower quality strategies, and may be just as vulnerable to gridlock as top-down approaches (Layzer 2008, Bodin 2017; Wilkinson 2007, *unpublished thesis*). In many places, political culture is increasingly characterized by extreme framing and polarization that intensify conflict, making the need for collaboration more pressing but the ability to work across differences more difficult (Emerson et al. 2017, Crothers and O'Donohue 2019). One measure of polarization, i.e., affective polarization (or the extent to which individuals dislike members of another political party) is skyrocketing in the United States (Pew Research Center 2016, Boxell et al. 2020). This political infiltration into social spaces could impede efforts to bring diverse groups together and make it more difficult for collaboration to overcome the very divisions it was designed to address (Iyengar et al. 2019).

Early scholarship on collaborative governance focused on identifying the aspects that make the process successful (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000). Prior research is limited by a focus on successful cases and reliance on measures of perceived performance that are vulnerable to problems with recall (Koontz and Thomas 2006). The need continues for evaluation of whether and in what cases collaborative governance is the most effective way of solving pressing environmental problems (Bodin 2017). Increased attention to the role of contextual variables and how processes evolve over time in the face of increasing political polarization can provide a more nuanced understanding of collaborative governance (Cockburn et al. 2020, Ulibarri et al. 2020, Schoon et al. 2021).

Some argue that the interwoven challenges of wildfire, drought, invasive species, climate, and land use change in the American West can only be addressed through collaboration because of the patchwork of governing jurisdictions and the track record of litigation stalemates (Charnley et al. 2014). This research is a case study of an independently convened collaboration designed to inform public forest planning in a context characterized by political polarization in the American West. We used participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document review to trace how collaborative dynamics interacted with a system context over time to produce outcomes. Our research question is: how does a polarized context affect specific elements of the collaborative governance regime (CGR) framework, and vice versa, over time? Our objective is to inform theory about how context impacts collaborative environmental governance, to identify which collaboration dynamics are most important under polarized and changing system contexts, and to distill key lessons for future collaboration efforts.

BACKGROUND

We synthesize relevant literature on collaborative governance, the state of public land collaboration in the American West, and the understanding of polarization in the United States as a contextual factor.

Collaborative governance in context

Collaborative governance is defined as public policy processes "that engage people across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government, and/or the public, private, and civic spheres to work together on a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished" (Emerson et al. 2012:2). Collaboration in policy

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settings supports all manner of positive outcomes, but is dependent on a complex interplay of factors, including collaboration dynamics and context (Ostrom 2009, Emerson and Nabatchi 2015, Ulibarri 2015, Bodin 2017). There may be an upper limit to problem complexity or conflict history that collaboration can address. In some cases, collaboration can escalate conflict or consume, rather than build social capital (Walker and Hurley 2004, Ansell and Gash 2008).

A framework for analyzing collaborative governance regimes (CGR) highlights three interwoven dynamics of collaboration (principled engagement, shared motivation, and capacity for joint action) that are of key importance (Emerson and Nabatchi 2015). Principled engagement captures how participants interact through an open process of discovery about issues and others' beliefs, building shared meaning, jointly deliberating, and ultimately making decisions. Factors that are integral to principled engagement are balanced representation, sincere face-to-face dialogue, and interim decision making (Ansell and Gash 2008, Emerson and Nabatchi 2015, Ulibarri 2015). Shared motivation represents interpersonal dynamics, such as whether participants trust one another, feel that the process is legitimate, and are mutually committed. Finally, capacity for joint action includes the institutional and procedural arrangements of the group, including leadership, resources, and knowledge.

Social learning, defined as "a change in understanding that goes beyond the individual to become situated within wider social units or communities of practice through social interactions," is an aspect of principled engagement but is also a primary outcome of interest (Reed et al. 2010). Although social learning is often observed, it is not automatic and depends on collaborative dynamics (Emerson et al. 2017). Studies demonstrate the importance of diversity in supporting social learning and collective intelligence, defined as the ability of a group to perform more effectively than any individual alone (Schusler et al. 2003, Mann and Helbing 2017). Diversity in beliefs is positively related to relational learning, whereas diversity in participant affiliation is negatively related to relational learning (Siddiki et al. 2017). Distinguishing between the groups included in a collaborative process (descriptive diversity) and those that meaningfully contribute to the process (substantive diversity) can paint a different picture of balanced representation in a collaboration (Koski et al. 2016). Together, these findings call for more attention to how diversity is conceptualized and assessed in collaborative governance research.

The CGR framework also highlights that collaboration takes place in a "multi-layered system context" (Emerson and Nabatchi 2015). Resource conditions, policy frameworks, socioeconomic and cultural characteristics, network characteristics, political dynamics and power relations, and the history of conflict are all contextual elements that influence collaborative governance regimes. Despite that recognition, most research continues to treat context merely as a driver or "a background variable rather than a key explanatory variable" (Cockburn et al. 2020:6). Politics and power dynamics emerging from the system context are often the elephant in the room, despite arguments that all collaboration is inherently political (Amy 1987, Walker and Hurley 2004, Purdy and Jones 2012, Cockburn et al. 2020). Collaboration in practice can become dominated by private interests, exclude important voices, and bias results toward goals of facilitators or participants with more resources (Leach 2006, Sousa and Klyza 2007, Purdy and Jones 2012, Emerson and Nabatchi 2015).

Few (2001:112) theorized the concept of containment to describe collaboration as the "strategic management of public involvement in planning" to minimize disruption to preconceived goals, rather than a true invitation for deliberation. Counter-containment or network capture in which particular social groups try to redirect or capture the collaborative process to serve their own interest, can also occur (Few 2001, Bixler et al. 2016). If counter-containment is not possible, stakeholders might resort to derailment, an intentional effort to undermine, delegitimate, or stop the collaborative process to prevent undesirable outcomes (Walker and Hurley 2004). Although skillful collaboration, by definition, would seem to preclude such tactics, these options always lie in wait for stakeholders, depending on how a CGR unfolds. Ulibarri et al. (2020:631) showed that most CGR follow "curvy paths of development with instances of reorientation, recreation and/or decline." Navigating changing health and usefulness of collaborations and knowing when and how to productively adapt CGR over time to dynamic contexts, including efforts at containment, counter-containment, or derailment, remains an important research question.

Public land collaboration in the American West

The American West includes the 13 states west of the 100th meridian in the United States that share characteristics of aridity, topographic complexity, and a high proportion of federal land ownership (Jones et al. 2019, U.S. Census Bureau, date unknown). The U.S. federal government controls 592 million acres of land in the American West, primarily under jurisdiction of the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Conflict related to public lands is "as old as the nation itself" (Graf 1990). The conflict is due not only to a history of competing statutes and special interest groups fighting for priority of use but also to the material connections of these lands to rural prosperity and cultural identity (Charnley et al. 2008). As public land agencies' management shifted several times from sustained yield and multiple use toward ecosystem-based management, the result was a reduction in timber harvested and grass foraged by livestock (Charnley et al. 2008, Swette and Lambin 2021). Since the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA) passed in the 1970s, interested parties, especially environmental groups, found that the best lever to influence agency decision making was through the courts (USEPA 1970). This history created deep mistrust and anger toward agencies, as well as a "litigation problems" and "analysis paralysis" in which managing agencies felt unable to move forward with effective management (Kosek 2006, Donoghue and Sturtevant 2008, Nie and Metcalf 2015:10 and 11, respectively).

As a response to these issues, organized collaboration between federal land managers and stakeholders increased. Such efforts are expected to improve trust between the agency and the public, reduce costs, and avoid lengthy lawsuits (Davis et al. 2017, 2018). Collaboration takes many forms, including agency-led public participation, formal advisory committees, and incentivized community-led collaboration, such as the collaborative forest landscape restoration program (CFLRP; Butler and Shultz 2019).

Despite some successes, USFS-led collaboration is criticized as agency containment to rubber stamp plans that have already been made (Hibbard and Madsen 2003). Most national forests now have independent collaborative groups with their own missions and structures focused on wildfire risk and/or forest restoration (Davis et al. 2020). These groups fill gaps in agency capacity, but their ability to overcome conflict and build a deliberative policy process remains unproven (Walpole et al. 2017, Abrams 2019). Research generally indicates high participant satisfaction but comparatively low perceptions of performance (Davis et al. 2017). The ongoing investment in collaborative processes for public land management in the west depends on its efficacy in a dynamic political context.

Polarization as context

Old divides, from the water wars to the sagebrush rebellions, continue to animate current public land conflicts. However, the recent wave of political polarization in the United States and other democracies is arguably of a new type and intensity (Crothers and O'Donohue 2019). Partisan identification now predicts a host of social policy preferences better than any other demographic factor (Dimock and Caroll 2014). Geographic sorting has dramatically increased, creating more homogenous social networks, which reinforce information echo-chambers and amplify partisan messages and misinformation received from social and popular media (Pew Research Center 2016, Lazer et al. 2018). Intergroup contact promotes deliberation and compromise but increasing affective polarization can create a potential backfire effect, such that people become more polarized after exposure to opposing viewpoints on social media (Bail et al. 2018). This type of political sectarianism characterized by an alliance of partisan identity over policy positions and strong contempt for opposing partisans has the potential to impact collaborative governance (Finkel et al. 2020).

Amid conditions of polarization, partisan identity becomes a dominant cultural identity, such that engagement in politics or policy processes does not have the cognitive flexibility and agency valued in democratic participation (Ruckelhaus 2022). Identity is a complex concept with distinct definitions and theorizations across disciplines (Weiner and Tatum 2020). We define identity as the mixture of cognitive, relational, and symbolic attachments that together create an operable self-conception that can be mutually recognized to inform social groups (Ruckelhaus 2022). Identity is not one-dimensional or static and can be context-dependent (Weiner and Tatum 2020). In the current era of polarization, other dimensions (e.g., ethnic, socioeconomic class) of cultural identities are mutable to align with partisan identity (Egan 2020).

Although conflicts related to public land in the American West do not always fall on party lines and can be characterized by unlikely alliances, public land issues are often embroiled in national politics (McKinney 2018, Hillis et al. 2020). Understanding collaboration related to public lands must consider the current trends in political polarization as part of how a dynamic system context can impact collaboration, and vice versa. Attempting collaboration amid such intractable conflict has been called naïve or destructive, but it is not always clear when such contextual factors dis-recommend or, in fact, require collaborative effort (Cockburn et al. 2020).

METHODS

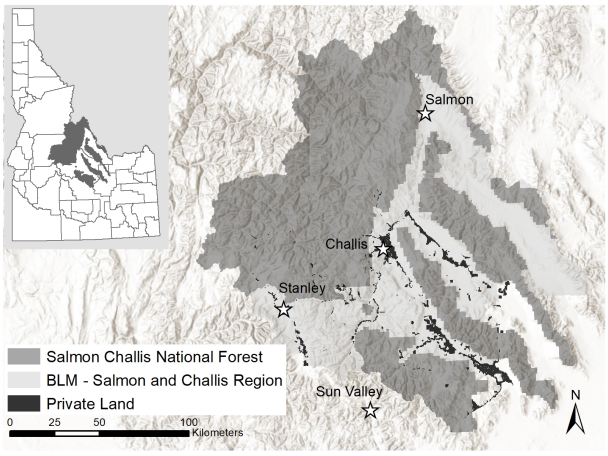
Case study: the Central Idaho Public Lands Collaborative

This research is a single case study of the Central Idaho Public Lands Collaborative (CIPLC; hereafter the Collaborative), a multi-stakeholder group whose goal is to inform the forest-plan revision led by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) on the Salmon-Challis National Forest (SCNF). A forest plan sets the overall management direction and guidance for all activities in a national forest, similar to a city or county comprehensive plan (USFS 2016). The updated 2012 planning rule enhanced the role of public participation in the process, requiring "collaborative processes where feasible and appropriate" (USDA Planning Rule 2012).

The SCNF is in the Idaho portion of the High Divide, a stretch of the Northern Rockies between the greater Yellowstone ecosystem and the crown of the continent within traditional Shoshone-Bannock and Nez Perce territory (Fig. 1). The federal government controls over 90% of the land, which is valued for its large stretches of intact ecosystems that act as a climate refuge and support landscape connectivity. Extractive industries, such as mining, are subject to boom-and-bust cycles, and both the ranching and timber industries are generally on the decline (USFS-SCNF 2018, Swette and Lambin 2021). Past land designations for conservation (most recently three new wilderness areas in 2015) inspired local resistance and conflict. The region is deeply Republican, but some Democratic pockets around Sun Valley, which has long attracted wealthy amenity migrants, are growing (Martin 2019). The Idaho Tea Party anti-government ideology rose to prominence in the state after the 2016 elections. Polarization along these political divides greatly affects views about appropriate forest management in the region.

A group of citizens responded to a successful collaboration track-record, related to the CFLRP, by asking a local community-based organization, Salmon Valley Stewardship (SVS), to convene a multistakeholder dialogue about forest plan revision. After scoping meetings with broad participation, a smaller group of interested citizens decided to form the Collaborative, a formal

Fig. 1. Map of the Salmon-Challis National Forest and the surrounding Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and private lands. The major towns and cities are noted.



group independent of the USFS. Their mission is to "develop recommendations for the management of public lands that reflect the needs and desires of the general public and provide these recommendations" to the SCNF during the revision of the forest plan (CIPLC frequently asked questions https://cipubliclandsplanning.ning.com/documents/ciplc-faq). The USFS retains all decision-making authority and there is no formal devolution of power to the Collaborative. The Collaborative is unique because it is fully independent from the USFS. Most national forests, which initiated planning under the 2012 planning rule, hired an outside facilitator to design and lead collaborative public participation (McKinney 2015).

After the Collaboration was underway, a separate group of citizens with leadership ties to the Idaho Tea Party created the Lemhi-Custer Grassroots Advisory (hereafter Grassroots Advisory) to also work on forest planning. A precipitating incident that led to the Grassroots Advisory's formation was a USFS public meeting in which a group of citizens repeatedly interrupted USFS staff. To calm the crowd, one USFS staff said: "We don't have to act like angry villagers." This comment became a primary point of objection, by the Grassroots Advisory, to criticize how the USFS related to the local community. "Angry villager" bumper stickers could be spotted around town. The formation of the Grassroots Advisory both reflected and altered the political context of the Collaborative.

Following a typology based on formative type (Emerson and Nabatchi 2015), the Collaborative is an independently convened CGR. The case shares characteristics of a self-initiated (or bottom-up) CGR given its inception by a group of voluntary stakeholders, but we classify it as independently convened because of the central role of an independent facilitator in designing the process and providing a platform for communication between members. We classify our case study as an extreme case of collaboration in a highly polarized system context. The formation of an alternate group engaging in a policy process alongside a formal collaborative group is atypical of most studied collaborative governance processes. The dramatic nature of the case "involved more actors and mechanisms" (Flyvberg 2006:229) than an average case, such that it is useful to support theory development about both how collaborative processes unfold in dynamic system contexts and which factors affect that process (Ansell and Gash 2008). The case offers lessons specific to contexts characterized by high levels of partisanship and polarization.

Data sources and analysis

We used a single case study design to enable an in-depth understanding of collaborative dynamics and attention to rich contextual information. We selected the case at its inception, which offered an opportunity to study the process from start to finish and avoided selection bias toward successful cases or a "halo effect" when participants positively skewed recollections based on recent experience (Koontz and Thomas 2006).

The study used participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document review for data collection (IRB #41763). The lead author observed over 75 hours of collaborative meetings, gatherings, and field trips between fall 2017 and spring 2020. They reviewed official meeting notes, group-wide email communications, and written outputs produced by the group. They also conducted 19 semi-structured interviews (in person and on video conference) with Collaborative members, Grassroots Advisory participants, and USFS staff. Interviews lasted between one and two hours and were administered between August 2018 and September 2021. Interview subjects were selected to represent the main groups involved, specifically agriculture (2 interviewees), environment (7), agency (3), recreation (2), and local citizens (5). An open invitation for interviewees was also sent to the Collaborative email list.

We developed a semi-structured interview protocol based on initial observations and literature review (Appendix 1). The interviews focused on research questions informed by the CGR framework but followed emerging themes. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were analyzed in NVivo 12 with an initial set of codes based on the CGR framework (QSR 2020). Codes were added as necessary in an open-coding process (Strauss and Corbin 1997). We used process tracing to analyze data and identify the causal mechanisms that connected factors of the context and collaborative process to outcomes. The CGR framework provided the hypothesized topics "meriting analytic attention" for process tracing (Collier 2011:824). The long period of observation and interview data at multiple time steps allowed us to connect the sequence of variables in a causal chain. We did not attribute identifying information to most quotes to maintain anonymity for interview respondents given the small size of the Collaborative. All quotes are from people that participated in or interacted with the Collaborative, the Grassroots Advisory members, and the USFS staff.

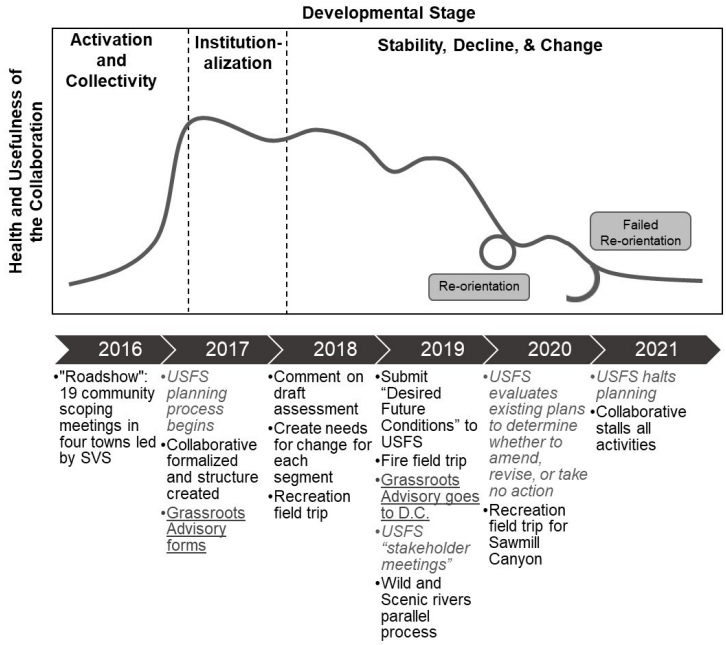
RESULTS

From collaboration to derailment

The Collaborative formalized a mission and vision, a statement of good intent, and a structure in the first few months of its official formation (Fig. 2). The group sought consensus agreement among participants and identified 24 voting members whose vote counted in the consensus process to ensure a balanced representation of 6 "segments" of society (Appendix 2). The "segments" bundled user groups and affiliations with similar interests in the national forest, such as agriculture with mining, and general conservation with sportsman conservation. The broader membership worked primarily in working groups to create comments and proposals that corresponded to the USFS planning process (Fig. 2). The Collaborative tried to engage with the Grassroots Advisory immediately after their formation by inviting members to participate in their process. The most vocal leaders of the Grassroots Advisory did not want to collaborate, but others participated in both groups. A few members that initially participated in the Collaborative gravitated toward the Grassroots Advisory over time.

By 2019, leaders of the Grassroots Advisory used political connections within the Trump Administration to bring oversight of the local planning process from the regional and national USFS offices. Their complaints focused on a lack of community involvement by the Collaborative and underrepresentation from natural resources industries. The members of the Grassroots Advisory were galvanized by the election of far-right Republican candidates to the Idaho State House of Representatives and Donald Trump as President. One Collaborative member reflected,

Fig. 2. Development trajectory of the Central Idaho Public Lands Collaborative (above). Salmon-Challis National Forest planning timeline of key activities of the United States Forest Service (USFS), the Collaborative, and the Grassroots Advisory (below). Development trajectory figure adapted from Ulibarri et al. (2021). Discussion of the concept of health and usefulness of a governance process can be found in Imperial et al. (2016).



"I learned there's a lot of justified anger. However, the way the [Grassroots Advisory] were going about it was because they were in power." An expanded analysis of the Grassroots Advisory is provided in Appendix 3.

The USFS held meetings with both the Grassroots Advisory and Collaborative groups to dialogue about concerns. These meetings included participants from higher levels of the USFS, one of whom wrote in an email to colleagues (obtained by a Freedom of Information Act [FOIA] request by the Grassroots Advisory):

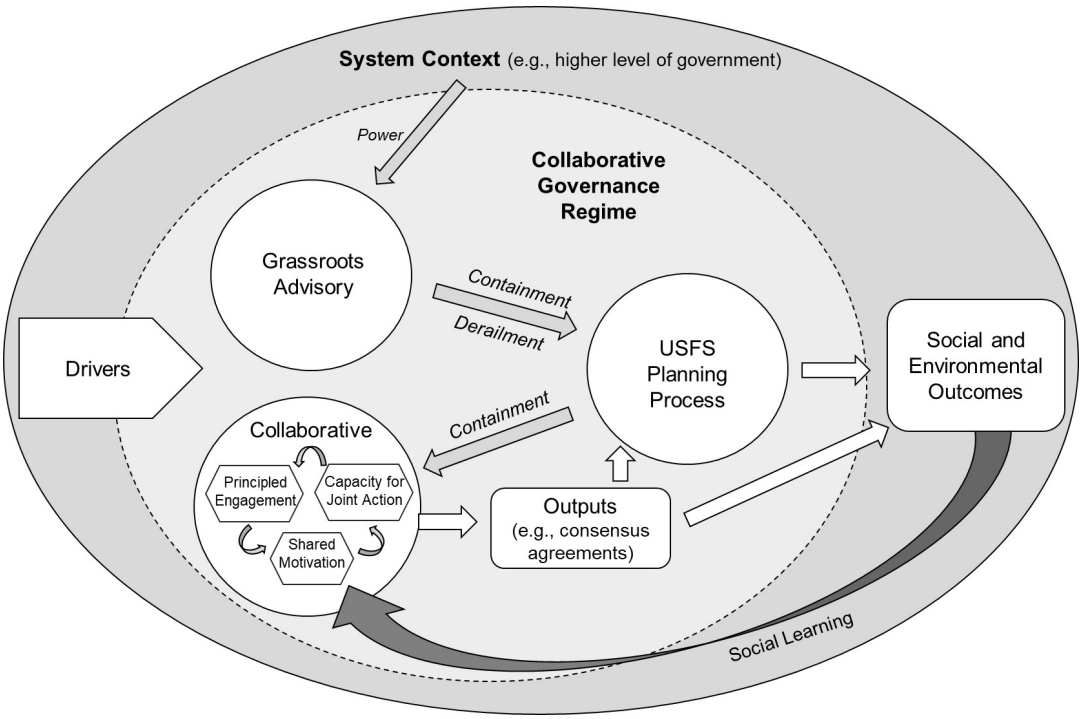
> *I fear this process will implode due to the poor relationship with this Grassroots Advisory*. I believe if improvements are not made quickly this movement may get much louder and end up in DC possibly the White House. This situation could be the poster child for exclusion of local input to the FS process.

The SCNF forest supervisor responded by pausing the planning process to review whether to move forward with a full plan revision and, if so, whether to maintain two separate plans for the Salmon and Challis regions. Amid this uncertainty, the Collaborative decided to reorient their focus on the parallel process of Wild and Scenic rivers, which resulted in a successful consensus proposal (Fig. 2; Appendix 3, A3.2). Because the USFS continued to stall, the Collaborative reoriented again to focus on a recreation project with the goal of achieving a concrete success. The project ultimately failed to get consensual approval when a small number of citizens with strong environmental interests blocked the proposal.

These reorientations did not overcome the significant decline in health of the group amid the Grassroots Advisory's contestations (Fig. 2). In the early and middle stages of development, the Collaborative invested in designing and implementing a process characterized by the three collaboration dynamics of principled engagement, shared motivation, and capacity for joint action (Appendix 4, Table A4.1). Most in the Collaborative believed the group was internally successful at meeting these conditions in the early stages of the process and that these dynamics supported outputs and outcomes that met many of the goals of collaboration, i.e., building trust among participants, strengthening relationships and networks, solving conflict, cognitive and relational learning, and producing high-quality outputs (Appendix 4, Table A4.2). However, there was disagreement among members about the extent to which certain conditions were met over time. Although the Collaborative did not officially disband, activities stalled. The USFS then decided to indefinitely halt the planning process, an effective derailment by the Grassroots Advisory. Members particularly expressed dissatisfaction with how the Collaborative responded to external contextual factors related to the Grassroots Advisory and the eventual derailment of the broader USFS process (Appendix 4, Table A4.1).

The derailment could be viewed as external to the Collaborative and indeed some participants felt that the outcome was out of their control because of the decisions made by the USFS. But the Grassroots Advisory arose because of a shifting political context and through interactions with the Collaborative and the USFS (Fig. 3; Appendix 3). One Collaborative member acknowledged

Fig. 3. Conceptual framework of the collaborative governance regime. Adapted from Emerson and Nabatchi (2015).



that "the success of the Collaborative is what brought forward the Grassroots Advisory." Although some Grassroots Advisory members, particularly the leadership, never intended to collaborate and were never part of the Collaborative, others gravitated toward the Grassroots Advisory in response to their experiences with the Collaborative. The USFS staff shared that the forest supervisor stalled the process because they believed the current approach to public participation was not achieving a broadly supportable plan. We present results that show how collaborative dynamics interacted with a polarized context over time to influence the eventual derailment of the planning process. We focus on two factors of capacity for joint action (facilitation and collaborative structure) and two factors of principled engagement (balanced representation and social learning) that proved to be critical in the outcomes of the case.

Facilitation: local or objective?

Most members of the Collaborative agreed that SVS was a good choice for the facilitating organization because it is a local organization with a track record for convening collaborations related to public lands and has the administrative capacity to secure funding and organize the process. Salmon Valley Stewardship initially resisted playing a convening role because staff understood both the political nature and long-time horizon of forest planning. At the pressure of a few regional environmental nongovernmental organizations (ENGOs) and funders, they agreed. Interviewees generally reflected that the facilitation "was excellent. The facilitators overcame a lot of hurdles and adapted on the fly. I don't think that could have gone any better." The lead facilitator within the organization was new to the area and did not have a background in public lands or conservation, which was believed to make them an unbiased facilitator. They also pursued a certificate in conflict resolution to build facilitation skills. Effective facilitation enabled positive collaboration dynamics within the group and many of the desirable outcomes observed (Appendix 4, Table A4.1).

In a context of political polarization, the local organization could not maintain a broader reputation as objective and impartial. Despite best efforts at maintaining neutrality, many viewed SVS as an ENGO with a mission because of previous relationships with ENGOs and the USFS. One Collaborative member shared,

> *A large sector of our community feels that SVS leans a little bit left. Some town people were a bit hesitant at believing SVS's full mission was just to facilitate collaboratively and could come out with the best approach.*

The Grassroots Advisory publicly criticized the fact that the prior executive director of SVS became the USFS collaboration specialist on the planning team. Salmon Valley Stewardship also received funding to work with the USFS on a separate campaign, which was misrepresented by the Grassroots Advisory as the USFS funding, and thus giving preferential treatment to the Collaborative. Although not the opinion of most members, one reported,

> *The Collaborative was a puppet for the Forest Plan Revision Team...There was an extreme favoritism. If you're running a meeting, you can push and allow who to speak. You can try to control it and you can influence who talks and who doesn't. And you can shut people down if you don't particularly want to hear their story.*

Although the working relationship between the USFS and SVS internally supported the capacity of the Collaborative, the close connection between the group and the agency undermined the external validity as an unbiased group.

Salmon Valley Stewardship not only acted as the facilitator but also provided de facto leadership and a strong convening role. Salmon Valley Stewardship made multiple efforts to delegate responsibility, but no formal devolution of leadership occurred. Some interviewees were unclear about how decisions were made, such as how working group topics were chosen or how the voting membership structure was decided. Given the polarized context, the concentration of power in SVS led to uneasiness suggesting that the facilitator made too many decisions unilaterally. The burden of external communication of group dynamics and decisions also fell to SVS, which exacerbated the impression that they were leading the group, rather than purely facilitating. One Collaborative member reflected,

> *It's almost a loss/loss situation...with an organization from outside the area, people may think, "They don't know anything about our local forest. Why are they here?" But an organization within that area, there's typically going to be a biased feeling one way or the other.*

Salmon Valley Stewardship served as a skilled facilitator for a previous collaboration, but prior ability to bring together diverse groups did not translate to the more contentious land planning process.

Collaborative structure: formal or inclusive?

Facilitators responded to expert advice and input from members on how to structure participation in the Collaborative to support healthy collaboration dynamics. The result was a highly formal process that limited participation from members. A voting member structure that was intended to create balanced representation instead alienated members that were otherwise not well represented (Appendix 2). One perspective from a Collaborative participant included,

> *There was a lot of concern with the voting structure and that left a sour taste in mouths directly from the start and they felt that they weren't having a voice*.

Another shared,

> *When I was told I would not be allowed to vote, but there was nobody representing my interest, that was as chink in the armor as far as representing a full collaborative*.

The Collaborative tried to improve communication about membership, but as one member said,

> *That term voting, non-voting, that blew up... We changed it. I can't remember what we changed it to, but it was too late*.

Similarly, strict requirements about how to become a member of the group gave an impression of exclusivity, even if all meetings were open to observers. In contrast, most members believed the working groups, which were open to anyone interested in the topic, to be the most productive parts of the structure. These smaller informal groups enabled deliberation, interim decision making, and trust building (Appendix 4, 4.1).

The early institutionalization of the Collaborative made it difficult to adapt when context changed. Internal notes from the USFS stakeholder meetings, obtained by a FOIA request, from the Grassroots Advisory read,

> *having a "recognized" collaborative may be the main problem*.

One member reflected after activities stalled,

> *None of us could see the forest for the trees. Just to say, this is not the political environment we can work in and we need to focus on recreation or fire prevention or something and just put a pause on it well before they did...*

Eventual efforts to reorient were superficial and never fundamentally addressed the structure or purpose of the group.

Balanced representation: community of place or mutual interest?

Balanced representation became a key issue that influenced collaborative outcomes over time in a polarized setting. Salmon Valley Stewardship led a concerted outreach effort to create an inclusive forum and recruit a broad range of stakeholders by defining segments of society to ensure balanced representation of those groups (Appendix 2). Most Collaborative members believed that the group maintained a rich diversity of experiences and beliefs, even though "everyone always wants more ranchers." They also acknowledged that the diversity in affiliations of members declined over time and that ENGO staff were the most active and persistent. United States Forest Service shared that the benefit of the Collaborative diminished as active participation became increasingly dominated by environmental groups. The legacy effect of the group's inception by ENGOs shaped future participation, in some cases pushing members toward participation in the Grassroots Advisory.

Forest planning is a relatively obscure and byzantine policy process for most ordinary citizens. In contrast, it is a high priority to interest groups because of the ability to impact long-term outcomes on the national forests. Environmental nongovernmental organizations were actively looking for a mechanism to participate and believed the context required collaboration to be effective. Formalized, procedure-heavy collaboration, sometimes called big "C" collaboration, has become so ubiquitous among conservation groups in Idaho that one interviewee referred to it as "The Idaho Model" (Davis 2019). Funders are also interested in supporting collaborative projects. The following two quotes from ENGO staff demonstrate their motivations:

> *It became clear that this was an opportunity to build stronger partnerships with conservation groups working in this area. We met with other conservation organizations and ended up trying to advocate to convene this collaborative*.

> *There's enough energy out there that links us to conspiracy theories that we realize if it's endorsed by the Collaborative, it's a lot stronger than if it's coming from our group alone*.

Largely because of the imbalance of interest from ENGOs, the Collaborative created a structure with an equal number of voting members from each segment (Appendix 1, Fig. A1.2). The early concentration of ENGO staff and their existing networks created

an imbalance of participation and power in the group from the outset. Members acknowledged that voting member positions were filled by usual suspects that had a past track record of collaborating with ENGOs and the USFS. One Collaborative member reflected,

> *Some of the ranchers that participated* ... some people felt they were conservationist.

Environmental non-government organizations staff are professionals and experts in the policy processes related to public land. Although these groups were not the only experts participating in the Collaborative, their large presence alienated some potential members.

> *One of the big fights is a lot of the locals felt very pressured or left out because there were so many nationally recognized powerhouse NGOs involved. And I think they felt really threatened about that*.

> *I watched it happen where a couple of times a rancher* shows up, and there's *another rancher* that they know and that feels comfy. Then *the next time* they show up, and it's like they're squeezed between *three ENGOs*. I don't think we ever saw them again.

The Grassroots Advisory publicly characterized the Collaborative as a group of paid employees of ENGOs, which obscured the structure of the group and impeded the ability for the Collaborative to appear inclusive to new members. As part of a derailment strategy, the Grassroots Advisory accused the Collaborative of being a containment tool by the USFS, as well as a method of counter-containment to create an environmental takeover of the forest plan. Over time, the influence of the Collaborative on the USFS process waned because of the growing concentration of ENGOs. The Grassroots Advisory was able to exploit this weakness to gain greater power to stall the USFS process, and thus the benefits to individuals participating in the Collaborative decreased further. This created a vicious cycle in which those who had the least to benefit decreased their engagement, and ENGO representatives became even more dominant.

> *The Forest Service was starting to stall, and there was a lot of burnout and people feeling that the plan wasn't going to be going anywhere. Getting people to commit to meetings was getting harder and harder*.

Our data suggest that shifting benefits of participation, rather than time itself, led to reduced participation and burnout, and drove the vicious cycle that precipitously reduced collaboration health beginning in 2019 (Fig. 2). Participants of all types were willing to invest an extraordinary number of hours in collaboration, but because the USFS stalled the planning process, the willingness to invest time without clear results declined.

Most members believed that the Collaborative needed to represent the broader Salmon-Challis community to be effective and have power in the USFS process.

> *There was a really strong effort at the kickoff to try and make the Collaborative the full voice of the people who were interested in forest plan revision*.

> *These have to be community driven processes. Yes, conservation is what our organization likes but we know it has to be community driven, that collaboration brings durable outcomes*.

Despite efforts to cultivate and maintain representation from the broader community, the "segments" based on user groups or affiliations did not capture how key stakeholders identified and led to contestations over whether the Collaborative represented either the groups it claimed to or the broader community. In this setting, the group could not overcome the Collaborative's initiation legacy effect by a group of ENGOs to maintain broad participation in the group. The Collaborative was ultimately better characterized as a group of mutual interest, rather than representative of the broader community of place, which impacted its efficacy and legitimacy.

Social learning: avoiding or overcoming conflict?

The dynamics of the Collaborative, i.e., efforts at creating balanced representation, face-to-face dialogue, and interim decision making, initially promoted internal social learning evidenced by the group's outputs (Appendix 4, Tables A4.1, A4.2). Many interviewees reported examples of relational and cognitive learning through the Collaborative, but social learning was uneven among participants (Appendix 4, Table A4.2). Three interrelated factors limited social learning in the polarized setting: the diversity of participants over time, the specificity of tasks on which the group worked, and whether there was constructive conflict.

Participants frequently expressed concern that diversity supported their learning. Most felt that the Collaborative maintained a rich diversity of beliefs, despite the waning diversity of affiliation. Although learning was still possible without representation from all groups, some members felt that the limited representation of the Grassroots Advisory impacted learning.

> *We were slowly getting to a point where we were really learning from each other. But once the Grassroots Advisory split away, I think that opportunity was gone*.

Although learning occurred, some interviewees felt that the most meaningful learning, that which would have bridged the divides paralyzing the policy process, was not achieved because of a failure to engage the members of the Grassroots Advisory.

> *There was a level of excitement, there was some commitment when we got started... And yet in some ways, I don't know that we're very much further than where we were because of this disconnect between different social groups*.

The Collaborative focused their efforts on predetermined components of the USFS plan, which enabled concrete discussion and group deliberation (Appendix 3). The specificity of the tasks, such as providing comments on a USFS draft assessment, allowed for trust building that set the stage for ongoing social learning. Members reported a high level of intimacy and familiarity with each other because of the frequent and intense interactions when working on such products. However, the focus on the USFS planning process was relatively obscure for many participants, which limited broader engagement and diverted attention from

areas of constructive conflict. Some members felt that the Collaborative was "not open to discussing the real issues, or doesn't necessarily want to engage in those very difficult discussions." Members reported that the group shied away from certain issues, such as wildfire, due in part to the polarized atmosphere. Collaborative members generally valued input from members participating in both groups, but the Collaborative struggled to effectively address members' key issues where conflict tended to be highest. Attempts to work on high conflict issues felt like superficial engagement rather than addressing the conflict. One member said,

> *There seemed to be a certain amount of, "Oh, we can't have conflict." … But my experience is that conflict isn't really conflict. It's people using different definitions for the same word...So to be afraid of conflict is, I think, a waste of time.*

The avoidance of high-conflict issues allowed for interim social learning but limited the capacity of the Collaborative to overcome broader divisions in the community. This dynamic pushed some people away from the Collaborative and toward the Grassroots Advisory because they felt that their issue was not being adequately addressed. After the Collaborative stalled activities, one member reflected on his new desire to address conflict directly,

> *When the Forest gets started again, I'm going to try to get in front of the Lemhi-Custer Grassroots committee and try to take some of the fear away.*

DISCUSSION

Research must move beyond a mere recognition of the importance of contextual factors to directly address how collaborative governance regimes engage with and are impacted by dynamic contexts (Davis 2019, Cockburn et al. 2020). This case shows that increased political polarization is likely to make contestations to collaborative governance more common and produce factions that will try to contain or counter-contain for their own interest or derail the process entirely (Walker and Hurley 2004). Higher levels of government can create conditions that give power either to collaborative approaches or to specific interest groups. A CGR can build power in a local process by bringing together diverse voices, but the balance of power may shift because of changes at other levels of government. Certain groups may be less likely to collaborate if their power is growing (Ansell and Gash 2008). The ultimate derailment of the USFS process in this case highlights the vulnerability of local collaborative approaches to political shifts at other scales of government that change the balance of power (Fig. 3).

Although some CGRs will fail because of political context irrespective of procedural issues, we highlight that collaboration dynamics are context sensitive and influence the motivation and ability for groups to pursue containment, counter-containment, and derailment strategies. "Politics are not separate from collaboration, but an integral part of it" (Walker and Hurley 2004:737). Each group or individual always has the choice of whether participation in a collaborative effort is the best action to support their interests. The choice to collaborate depends on whether the CGR can address a concern and maintain credibility in the larger policy process. The CGR at the center of this case experienced a slow decline in health not just because of contextual factors but because of how its dynamics interacted with a changing context over time (Ulibarri et al. 2020; Fig. 2). Our results build on collaborative theory represented in the CGR framework (Emerson and Nabatchi 2015) by showing how polarized contexts affect effective facilitation and structure, balanced representation, and social learning. As an extreme case, the polarized context put pressure on elements of the CGR in ways that prove useful for theory development and revealed trade-offs for collaborative design that might not be apparent or critical in nonpolarized contexts. Based on these trade-offs, we discuss four lessons learned for the design of CGRs and their evolution given dynamic political contexts.

(1) Initiation type and initiating leadership create path dependence and inability to expand leadership is a signal to recreate the CGR

This case supports findings: (1) the way a CGR is initiated impacts subsequent dynamics and (2) performance with self-initiated CGRs performs best over time (Ulibarri et al. 2020). The key role of ENGOs in directing the facilitating organization to initiate the Collaborative resulted in an externally initiated CGR, with long-term consequences for participation and performance. Initiating leadership often relies on their existing network to select and invite additional participants (Koski et al. 2016). Prior studies indicate the importance of unbiased facilitation for conflict management (Emerson and Nabatchi 2015). Our results suggest that, in polarized contexts, some parties are likely to perceive bias in leadership and facilitation, which is exacerbated in an externally initiated CGR. Narrow initiating leadership can unintentionally exclude key groups, which undermines legitimacy and reduces engagement over time, even when efforts are made to ensure objectivity and impartiality.

A key indicator of legitimacy that supports long-term CGR health is expansion of leadership (Ulibarri et al. 2020). In this case, the facilitators tried and failed repeatedly to facilitate others to take on leadership of the Collaborative. This inability to expand and share group power, especially beyond ENGOs, was an early warning sign that the CGR was declining in health and required more substantial efforts at recreation. The Collaborative openly discussed that their group's relevance decreased over time, but they struggled to know when and how to adjust course. The case suggests that externally initiated CGRs are more likely to begin with narrower leadership because of the role of a central actor and thus may struggle to ultimately expand leadership. Davis et al. (2018:226) described that it can be difficult to know when a CGR must represent a broader community of place versus a "coalition of the willing." Our findings suggest that polarized contexts might require that CGRs evolve to represent the broader community of place to be effective.

Externally initiated CGRs are becoming more common as ENGOs and funders push for collaborative solutions. Early collaborative successes were largely bottom-up, motivated by sincere frustration on all sides over gridlock. More recently, environmental groups are adopting collaboration as a matter of course to build political power regardless of context. This fact does not mean that these groups do not participate in good faith or do not genuinely believe that a collaborative resolution is stronger. However, a one-sided push for collaborative solutions may backfire in polarized contexts. Self-initiated CGRs may be

better able to weather a turbulent context because they grow out of a stronger desire to collaborate from the key parties. Such contexts may therefore require self-initiated CGRs, which are better at resolving conflicts than those that are externally initiated (Ulibarri et al. 2020). In practice, limiting the role of the facilitator at the outset may also help overcome challenges related to narrow initiating leadership.

(2) Early formalization and an overly structured collaborative can exacerbate conflict and affect the ability to adapt to a dynamic political context

Although a minimum level of formality is required for collaborative governance to work, the degree of formalization varies significantly (Emerson and Nabatchi 2015). Past research shows that higher degrees of complex issues or actors benefit from more formal governance arrangements (Ostrom 2009). Formalization can also provide stability and can help secure resources for long-term collaboration (Cheng and Sturtevant 2012). This research identifies an important trade-off that informs theory about the appropriate degree and timing of formalization depending on context. Highly formal CGR arrangements can have unintended consequences of limiting participation and increasing division. Refraining from formalizing the group at the outset and relying on loosely formulated working groups and informal field trips could have avoided the impression that the facilitator or others were trying to closely manage the membership and power dynamics of the group. Informal arrangements, such as less-structured working groups, can be an important venue to iteratively develop a process characterized by principled engagement (Innes et al. 2007, Emerson and Nabatchi 2015). This case supports recent theory that overly formal designs that are the focus of big "C" Collaboration cannot consider changes in system contexts, leaving facilitators stuck with rigid representation schemas that inhibit adaptation (Davis 2019). Even when leadership tries to reorient the group, the initial structure has a legacy effect that is difficult to overcome.

(3) Understanding identity is important to define substantive diversity and achieve balanced representation

Defining clear boundaries of who participates in a CGR and maintaining balanced representation of those groups are key elements to successful collaborations (Ansell and Gash 2008). In polarized settings, representation is likely to be contested, and a lack of substantive diversity will impact CGR health over time. This result supports a prior finding that participants with low trust in public organizations are likely to scrutinize representation to evaluate CGR legitimacy (Lee and Esteve 2022). The CGR approached the problem of representation by recruiting different public land stakeholder groups and trying to maintain a balance of affiliations (Appendix 2). Members believed that the Collaborative held a diversity of beliefs and policy positions. However, given the role of partisan identity in the polarized system context, neither a diversity of affiliations nor beliefs adequately engaged or represented the key stakeholders driving division.

The findings build on previous research that highlights the importance of substantive diversity in collaboration to achieve balanced representation (Koski et al. 2016). Our results show that evaluations of substantive diversity must examine whether the intended groups feel adequately represented by specific categories or individuals. Defining diversity with the wrong categories can just as easily compromise substantive diversity as a lack of meaningful participation by the groups in the room. Achieving balanced representation thus requires attention to how stakeholders identify and which aspects of their identity drive their behavior in the CGR. Static or one-dimensional conceptualizations of identity groups, such as user-group affiliations, may not be instructive for defining diversity in collaborative settings (Weiner and Tatum 2020). Partisan identities can also be in danger of oversimplification, as Republican or Democratic affiliation would not capture the types of partisan identities that shaped participation. Instead, partisan identities tied to anxieties of inclusion in a changing social-environmental context were most important. For collaborative governance to promote civil discourse and inclusive communication, CGRs must pay attention to how identities are shaped by partisan influence. Understanding which identities are significant in the governance process can inform strategies for conceptualizing diversity and structuring representation. Neglecting to conceptualize participation in collaboration as political will undermine the process.

(4) Absence of key types of diversity and conflict avoidance limit cognitive social learning

Although social learning occurred in the Collaborative, most members agreed that important types of cognitive learning were compromised by the absence of specific groups and by conflict avoidance. Siddiki et al. (2017) first noted that varying operationalizations of diversity could impede understanding of how diversity impacts social learning. In this case, participants provided ample evidence of both cognitive and relational learning that was supported by a diversity of affiliations and beliefs. However, cognitive learning was undermined by a lack of representation of the key groups driving the division. The results suggest that cognitive learning may be more sensitive to how diversity is defined than relational learning and may be context dependent. This insight does not directly refute theory from Siddiki et al. (2017) about the relationship between diversity and collaboration but adds nuance that should be further investigated.

This research also shows that conflict avoidance is not an effective long-term strategy, especially during highly contested and changing political times. Collaborative theory suggests the importance of constructive conflict for social learning (Emerson and Nabatchi 2015). But CGR leaders might shy away from what feels like intractable conflicts to avoid major disruptions from a few vocal members that appear to have extreme views. For example, facilitators were wary that catering to certain groups would disrupt group learning. The CGR stopped working for certain interests as a result of shying away from conflict, and the Grassroots Advisory's alternate strategy became more appealing. Conflict avoidance may be more tempting in contexts characterized by polarization but drawing the boundaries of a collaboration in which there is conflict will undermine learning and the ultimate effectiveness of outputs. Given the importance of engaging conflict, facilitators need to be trained not only in conflict resolution skills but in conflict management systems that support productive engagement of conflict over time (Siddiki et al. 2017).

This research is not without limitations. Although process tracing allowed us to identify how collaborative dynamics interacted with context to impact outcomes, we cannot say with certainty that the planning process would not have been derailed irrespective of collaborative dynamics. Moreover, although we observed the Collaborative through a key phase, the ultimate outcome of the process is still open-ended, and the Collaborative will most likely recreate itself in a new form when the USFS process restarts. Our results are also most relevant to high-level and complex policy processes that are particularly vulnerable to politics compared to project-level collaboratives.

CONCLUSION

Conflict related to public lands and their management is likely to intensify as climate and demographic changes put more pressure on the services and values that these lands provide. Despite the widespread institutionalization of collaboration in public land governance, its role in solving environmental conflict is far from settled. Some agency managers are looking to return to top-down decision making to overcome gridlock driven by recent polarization. Our context-sensitive understanding of a CGR revealed trade-offs and lessons that can help collaboratives navigate such changing political landscapes (Newig et al. 2018).

The CGR was internally successful during its early and middle periods of development but was unable to overcome a context of political polarization that ultimately derailed the policy process. A recent focus on formal CGRs, which employ best practices, can overshadow the need for groups to respond to specific contexts. Skilled facilitators and leaders are aware of the need for adaptive comanagement, but as collaboration has become more routine, the temptation to formalize collaborative groups is high. Increasing political polarization may instigate a shift toward self-initiated collaboration or little "c" collaboration characterized by informal shared problem solving (Davis 2019). Containment, counter-containment, and derailment of collaborative governance processes are always options for stakeholders but can be prevented if overly formal and one-size-fits-all approaches are avoided. This case highlights the need for additional understanding of how contextual variables influence the decision of when and how to reorient, recreate, or disband a CGR (Newig et al. 2018, Ulibarri et al. 2020). Our research suggests that failure to successfully expand leadership or exclusion of key stakeholders may be one indication that a full recreation of the collaboration is needed.

Increasing political polarization also requires increased attention to the role of identity in influencing principled engagement in collaboration. Additional research can move beyond concepts of diversity bound to affiliation or policy beliefs to investigate how environmental identities arising from recent forms of political polarization impact collaborative environmental governance. Future research can help describe the types of identities relevant to collaborative environmental governance in different contexts. Recent advances to increase focus on actors, their motives, and their social networks in CGRs could be a useful approach to better understand the role of identity in driving collaborative outcomes in polarized contexts (Bodin 2017, Carboni et al. 2017).

Understanding the limits of collaboration, including when and how the current era of political and societal polarization makes derailment of such efforts likely, is essential to inform the next turn in environmental governance. Our context-specific lessons can help stakeholders make decisions about when and how to collaborate. Making planning processes just and inclusive, while meeting urgent environmental challenges, requires investing in the capacity of governing bodies to meaningfully engage with stakeholders in a way that is not necessarily tied to formal collaborative processes.

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Data Availability:

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author, B. S. None of the data are publicly available because they contain information that could compromise the privacy of research participants. Ethical approval for this research study was granted by the Institutional Review Board at Stanford University (#41763).

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Appendix 1. Semi-structured interview protocol

A1.1 Personal History

- Can you share a bit about your personal background? (Where did you grow up? What was your life like before you lived here?)
- Can you describe your connection to the Salmon-Challis National Forest?

A1.2 Collaborative participation

- How did you first get engaged in the Collaborative?
- Who or what interest did you represent?
- Have you participated in any other collaborative initiatives or partnerships before this Forest planning process?
  - In what capacity did you participate?
- Why did you initially decide to participate in the Collaborative?
  - What kinds of issues were you interested in addressing through the Collaborative?
  - What motivates you to address these issues?
  - Why did you think it was important to address these issues through the Collaborative?
- Are you participating in the USFS planning process outside of the Collaborative?
  - How would you compare your participation in that process and the Collaborative?
- Can you provide an estimate about how much time your participation in the Collaborative required?
  - How, if at all, has your participation in the Collaborative changed over time?
  - Why do you think this change came about?
  - What elements of your participation did you find most valuable?
- How did you feel about the make-up of participants in the group?
  - Did you observe any challenges related to participation in the group?
  - Did you observe changes in participation over time?
  - Why do you think this was?
  - Do you agree that there was a lack of diversity in participation?

A1.3 Collaborative Process and Dynamics

- What has worked well about the Collaborative?
  - How do you characterize your personal satisfaction with the process [so far]?
  - Have there been any surprises about the process?
- How would you characterize the relationships among group members in the Collaborative?
  - How/why? What has been most important to support those relationships?
- How would you characterize the role of the facilitator in the group?
  - Was this effective?

    - What might have you changed about it?
- Do you feel you are able to share your perspective with other group members? How?
- Have you learned about the perspectives from other group members? How?
- Have there been instances when you disagreed with other members? Can you tell me more about that.
    - Have there been instances of disagreement/conflict among other members or the group as a whole?
    - How did those disagreements get addressed or resolved?
- Have there been instances when you agreed with other members (or other members agreed) and it surprised you?
    - What was surprising about that?
- How, if at all, have your ideas about [*issue from based on prior response*] changed during participation in the Collaborative? Or broadly, did you learn new things about X?
    - How did this change come about? (inquire about each change individually)
    - What do you think was the most important factor in affecting how you see/think about X? (e.g., intensity of interactions, diversity of participants)

A1.4 Outputs and Outcomes

- What did you envision as the outcomes of the Collaborative when you decided to participate?
- How would you characterize the impact of the Collaborative?
    - What are the major products of the group?
    - Are you satisfied with the products of the group?
    - Why?
- How would you characterize the relationship with the Forest Service and the Collaborative?
- How would you characterize the relationship between the Collaborative and external community/stakeholders who are not participating? Specifically, the Grassroots Advisory Council?
    - Why do you think that is?
    - How did that come about?
    - Why do you think these other members are not participating?
    - How might you compare the Collaborative and the Grassroots Advisory Council processes?
    - What do you think motivated the creation of the Grassroots Advisory?
    - How do you think the Collaborative responded to the Grassroots Advisory? How did it impact the Collaborative activities?
- What might you have changed about the process if you could go back?

Appendix 2. Collaborative structure

Figure A2.1 Structure and voting membership. The voting member table is made up of 4 representatives from each segment of society specified in Figure A2.2. The working groups are focused by topic areas and include at least three voting members and any Collaborative members that are interested in participating. Observers are also welcome.

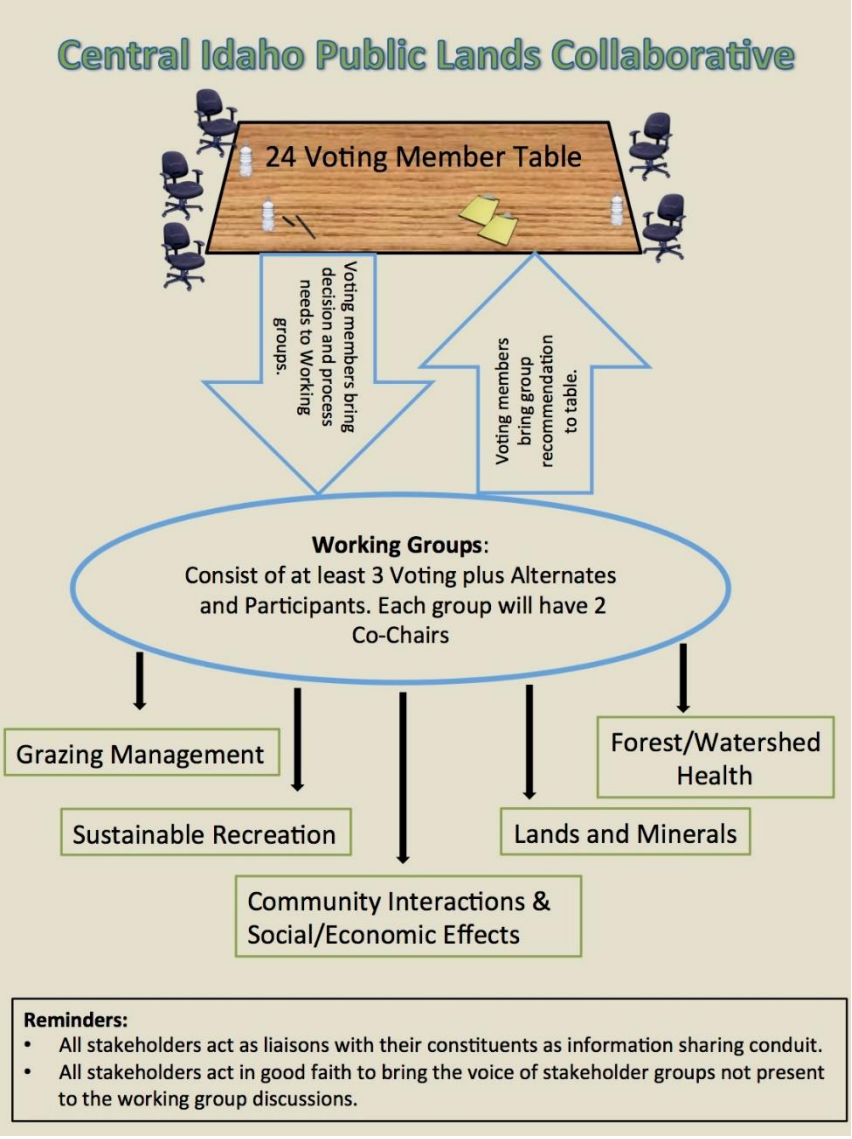

Table A2.1. Segments with representing groups. The segments were developed to structure participation and ensure balanced representation of key groups in the Collaborative.

Segment 1 Local Business Economic Development Chambers of Commerce	Segment 2 Mining Grazing/Agriculture Timber	Segment 3 Public Youth Legal/Law Adjacent Lands/In-Holding
Segment 4 Motorized recreation Non-motorized recreation Water Recreation Outfitters and Guides	Segment 5 Sportsmen Conservation Watershed and Species General Conservation Science & University	Segment 6 Lemhi Forest Restoration Group Aspen Working Group Central Idaho Rangelands Network 2L Trails Fish Recovery Partnership

Note: Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (ENGOs) are represented in Segment 5, by the General Conservation and Watershed and Species groups. We use the term ENGO in the paper, as that is the broader term utilized in the literature. The Collaborative did not allow the participation of elected officials such as County Commissioners because they had another forum to participate in the USFS process. Early members believed that their participation would politicize the process. The Collaborative does not include any members or representatives of Native American tribes, which engaged in the Planning Process independently.

Appendix 3. Additional description and analysis of the Lemhi-Custer Grassroots Advisory

In this appendix, we provide additional details about the Lemhi-Custer Grassroots Advisory (Grassroots Advisory), including why it formed, its leadership, issues of interest, and strategies. The Grassroots Advisory is not a collaboration of diverse groups, but an alliance of like-minded actors that sought to represent "the general public" and felt their interests were not otherwise meaningfully represented in the USFS planning process or the Central Idaho Public Lands Collaborative (Collaborative). While interviewees shared concern that the Grassroots Advisory was not operating in good faith and only sought to undermine the USFS planning process, most also recognized that legitimate concerns with both the USFS and Collaborative drove participation in the Grassroots Advisory and allowed them to ultimately derail the USFS planning process.

High-profile issues for this group include maintenance of multiple use activities and extractive industries, active timber management and logging, decreasing the gray wolf population, and revocation of wilderness study area designations. As described by one Collaborative member, "the attitudes and the things that they're opposing, right now, supports the ultra-conservative perspective on how to deal socially with natural resources." One Collaborative member said, "The sentiment was very anti-government. Forest service is government," and the anti-government ideology impacts their goals in relation to forest planning. While these issues politically align with the far-right, many Collaborative members also acknowledged that the divisions driving the Grassroots Advisory are not only about extractive use versus conservation, or liberal versus conservative. Citizens of Lemhi and Custer county express significant anxiety about inclusion in a changing community. The largest-capacity timber mill is long since closed. Grazing has reduced dramatically on the National Forests (Swette and Lambin 2021). Reflecting on who attended one of the first Grassroots Advisory group meetings, a Collaborative member described,

> *"[Elected representative] was leading it and then it was mostly ranchers that I hadn't met yet. And it was a lot of wood cutters…people that cut wood for firewood for their economic benefit and in Salmon. 90% of the people have heat with wood stove, and they had taken some hits from the Forest Service in how those permits were managed. And so there was a lot of anger with that…And the pain of what had happened to their grandparents had lost financial stability, or livelihood or whatever was very current to them…I think that's something people don't understand. If you haven't been hearing from folks what they had gone through to try to manage and live on the land. There were so many moments that I was like, wow, they do have something to be heard about."*

The response to the "angry villager" comment made by a USFS staff and is described in the main text as a precipitating incident that led to the group's formation, is indicative of a feeling of exclusion from past processes. Many in the community are skeptical of agency management of local resources and are wary of the ENGO apparatus that has grown up to support and influence those agencies. Some believed that ENGOs had effectively captured the agency, and that the Collaborative itself was a strategy of containment by both parties. These beliefs were driven by a history of feeling marginalized. Many interviewees believed that the Grassroots Advisory largely developed into an active group in response to the progress being made by the Collaborative.

These members did not feel that the Collaborative was a true invitation to collaborate and deliberate on the issues they cared about. One Collaborative member shared,

> *"Those two communities are significantly different and I think part of the big rift is that they saw this big Collaborative being built. A lot of NGOs, a lot of federal money coming from the outside, a lot of donations to pay full time professional mediators over here. These guys felt a little left out."*
>
> *Like all good rumors, there's partial truth to it. The fact is that Salmon Valley Stewardship could go over and talk to people in Forest Service. They were invited to meetings and they probably did have more access. It's not that the Forest Service wouldn't tell the other collaborative, but the other collaborative didn't feel that they were welcome.*

Concern over lack of principled engagement from the Grassroots Advisory stems largely from the tactics and rhetoric of political leadership that are prevalent in an era of affective polarization. Dorothy Moon, who was elected to the Idaho State House in 2016 as part of the Idaho Tea party, is a prominent example as a leader of the group. One Collaborative member shared, "[The Grassroots Advisory] is basically three people. They claim 200, but I've only ever seen three of them." Answering a question about what they believed this other group's goal was, one Collaborative member replied, "Shut it down. Dorothy Moon is very open about public lands in state hands. I think that was her mission from the beginning, make these guys look inept and inefficient as possible. It was never about providing input to the final revision." Another described, "They don't want change. They want to hurt the Forest Service. They don't believe in public lands, so I don't think a collaborative effort from them was ever given a chance…Collaboration is based on good faith. That's not good faith."

Their approach in public settings, such as public meetings or in local newspaper editorials, was particularly aggressive and antagonistic. Collaborative members shared,

> "*I sat in a room and watched a State Representative from Custer County spin lies. I mean just lied. Not even anywhere even tethered to reality. How do you collaborate with that?"*
>
> *"I was terrified. It was rabble rousing, it was anger. It was we're going to get this other group. And it was the first time I was like, what is this? They targeted the Forest Service mostly, but they were like, 'and this other [Collaborative] and they work for the Forest Service.' It definitely was anger at the SVS, at the collaborative. But it was mostly, 'how dare the Forest Service favor this other group? We're not going to let that happen. We're not going to let that happen to you all.' But the energy in the room was ... It was really hard to be around."*

However these tactics are not necessarily new or confined to one side of the political spectrum. One agency staff reflected that the only time they felt similar rudeness exhibited by the Grassroots Advocacy was from a leader of a regional ENGO that is vehemently opposed to grazing on public lands. Collaborative members also recognize this fact, explaining, "Well, a lot of the discussion on both the conservation side and the Grassroots advisory side is misinformation. It's based on politics…" Another shared, "There are bad actors on both sides of the spectrum. I have made a great deal about the far right, but there are bad actors on the left.

And we had bad actors on the left in this Collaborative." These types of tactics are a challenge for collaboration but are also precisely the dynamic that CGRs are trying to overcome by promoting principled engagement.

Despite the tactics of leadership within the Grassroots Advisory, individual Grassroots Advisory members that interacted with the Collaborative were generally respectful. Members valued their knowledge and perspective. At the same meeting that one Collaborative member witnessed a Grassroots Advisory member "spin lies", another reflected that he felt and recognized a common understanding and goal between these groups. Interviewees often reflected that this group had legitimate concerns with both the USFS planning process and the Collaborative, and witnessed how specific elements of the USFS and Collaborative processes pushed stakeholders toward the Grassroots Advisory. When conflict on some issues felt intractable, such as wildfire risk, facilitators were conflicted about how to address concerns without stalling progress of the broader group and that further marginalized these members. The Collaborative shied away from meaningfully engaging the divisions that were derailing the planning process. Collaborative members reflected,

> *"They tried and they were successful at getting some members with different viewpoints on the committee. But I feel that those folks that were on the committee, for whatever reasons, didn't feel that either their voices weren't being heard or that the collaborative was the right avenue for them or that the collaborative was going in the right direction. That's why I feel that the Lemhi-Custer Grassroots group ended up forming."*

> *"They didn't respond to it…and that was probably as self-defeating. When you look at the letters to the editor and all of the kind of crap that was coming out like that, against not only the USFS, but then SVS staff and other individuals, if you respond to that stuff, all you do is you get bogged down even further, it's counterproductive. But, you kind of think at some point that you got to do something, and we didn't, from my perspective."*

> *"So we're about year three now in the process. And the Forest Service or somebody hasn't been able to address their concerns… I agree with a lot of the things that group said. We wanted the same things they wanted. But they were willing to say, "I want them and you shouldn't be hiding from them. I asked for this information, why won't you give it to me?"*

Both the Collaborative and USFS staff recognized that the Grassroots Advisory was successful in ultimately derailing the process because of an increase in political power due to recent elections and their persistent tactics with the USFS. One USFS staff shared,

> *"We had a couple of folks from our DC office come out here. That's not normal for a forest planning project, you don't see that. I've never seen that in my career. My guess was that was in response to those complaints going to those offices."*

Two Collaborative members also reflected,

> *"They had some members that understood the system. Not only the way the system worked, but also understood the political system and knew who to talk to and how to talk to them to gain more influence."*

> *"They have been so totally persistent…It sounds like that there have been phone calls, there's been visits, there's been emails on, not necessarily a daily, but at least a weekly basis, from the ESO here, to the regional office, and directly to the Washington office. At least in my experience, that's generally not something that people do. From that standpoint, it got some attention."*

While shifting politics and recent elections emboldened the group to use aggressive tactics, their formation and ability to gain support and impact USFS decision-making over time depended on not just shifting power dynamics but their interactions with the USFS and the Collaborative through the planning process. Going to higher levels of power was successful not only because people in power were sympathetic to the cause, but because the USFS acknowledged that the current approach to public participation was not getting to a broadly supportable plan, and that there could be broader implications for forest planning. One agency staff shared,

> *"There was quite a bit of concern about just how it was going down there on the Salmon-Challis and whether that could affect other parts of the agency's business in terms of forest planning. They were looking to find some way to make this planning effort more digestible or relatable to those folks."*

> *"One of the things that is very important in making plans successful in the eyes of the agency is whether they're supportable by people. And if they're not, they're not a good idea in the agency's view…And I remember seeing the great diversions and viewpoints between some of the stakeholders. Like the timber thing for example, some people think it's a gold mine of wood here…And other people think the exact opposite. So you're nowhere close. And so trying to have a lucid discussion about what the allowable sale quantity is given those two viewpoints from stakeholders that matter becomes next to impossible…It's not a legal issue at all. It's really just more about, do you want plan that no one supports? Do you really want that? Even if it's a good one. Or would you rather try to build that support and then write it?"*

We outline in the main text how specific collaboration dynamics contributed to the formation of the Grassroots Advisory, limited the Collaborative's ability to be successful in overcoming conflict, and the ultimately derailment of the USFS planning process.

Appendix 4. Collaborative dynamics and outcomes

Table A4.1. Evidence supporting and not supporting three collaborative dynamics (principled engagement, shared motivation, and joint capacity), and the factors theorized to support each dynamic. The quotes were selected from interview transcripts to qualitatively represent the range of perspectives reported by interviewees and are not intended to be a quantitative analysis of which perspectives were dominant. The quotes provided here were analyzed in context of the full interview and lead author's observations of the Collaborative. Our analysis showed that the perspectives that did not support these dynamics were primarily due to ineffective engagement with the Grassroots Advisory and the eventual derailment of the broader USFS process.

Collaborative Dynamic and Factors connected to that Dynamic	**Quotes supporting that the dynamic was met**	**Quotes not supporting that the dynamic was met**
Principled Engagement		
Overall Principled Engagement	The point of the Collaborative is to not to be in agreement all of the time, but to work towards that…just talking through it, listening to peoples' perspectives on it, making compromises if you will…It's a long process of talking it through and giving some concessions here and there. I don't really have a preset agenda of what I'd like to see other than to have good local ideas and discussions put forward. I have my own personal opinion, but it's more important to see that it's something that's supported by everyone that we can actually come to some agreement on what our vision is for the region. I also believe that there is a few people inside the collaborative that are open and to looking at making changes and realizing that the existing plans are not working in and they want to see some changes that will come about.	My only conflict was when people were very hard lined and only wanted one thing…We came up against that in almost every meeting. It was people on the periphery, however those folks were typically the loudest and spoke the most often. So, it was definitely a driving force in a lot of the meetings. I feel like as a whole, that there were many in the collaborative that had preconceived notions about what they believe and also what they want out of a new forest plan. .
Balanced Representation	I think we had a lot of the right people in the room, people who have spent a lot of time working and thinking on these issues, and a lot of different types of	That's a legitimate criticism [that the group is not diverse], if you want to use it as a criticism…We've never had participation from mining. We've had

	experience. I don't feel that criticism [that the group is not diverse] is legitimate. And I think that the collaborative and the structure to begin with was as broad reaching and sensitive to that as we could be. I think it diverse. I think it is perceived to be still somewhat dominated by conservation groups, which is a tough thing, because it's like yes, we have more time to work on it, so if you go around the room it's like, "Who wants to be the lead on this?" And no one is stepping up, that might be something I would volunteer for. I think it was diverse enough. I think people had plenty of opportunity to be on the collaborative, and some chose not to… We had logging interest, we had motorized interests, and we had grazing interests. What happened is, over time, nothing was happening, so the grazing interest was wasting their time participating, so they went and used their time better. So at the end, the collaborative looks totally skewed. There's a couple of things that play into that. One is I'm paid full time to be there. The individual grazers don't have that luxury… And maybe even more importantly is there is a belief, a perception that we weren't conservative enough, and I would argue that we were conservative enough, but we were made to look liberal and dismissed because of that. They lied. They misrepresented us. They could have joined us. They could have been a part of us. They were invited. The Collaborative conducted 17 meetings. Unless we personally call and visit everyone, we're never going to be able to say that we included everyone. And I think that's just an unfair argument. I think that we were representative. They made us look bad. And ultimately, they won.	very little participation from ranchers. There's been a few but they're seem to be the ones who are usually participating in these things. We didn't have the timber management perspective on things. Absolutely [the Collaborative struggled to have diverse representation]. I think in the very beginning they tried and they were successful at getting some members with different viewpoints on the committee. But I feel that those folks that were on the committee, for whatever reasons, didn't feel that either their voices weren't being heard or that the Collaborative was the right avenue for them or that the Collaborative was going in the right direction. That's why I feel that the Lemhi-Custer Grassroots group ended up forming. Everybody went, put it on the board and said, "Hey, I want to serve in this and serve on that." And then we formed all of the committees and they sat down and determined if you will, where they were from. Well, I sat and looked and I said, "It is heavily skewed in the favor of environmental groups." When I was told I would not be allowed to vote, but they wanted ... there was nobody representing this issue that was as chink in the armor as far as representing a full collaborative. One thing that I didn't really like seeing was, outside interest groups from outside of the counties, being involved…And I guess I wouldn't have minded so much if some of the outside interests would have originated from within the planning area, just to keep things a little bit closer to home. The larger community was never engaged, and will never be engaged…The working family with two kids in hockey, just trying to make ends meet, they're never going to be engaged.

Face-to-face dialogue	On one of the tours we had one contingent that came and they were dead set on. No. Period. And we got talking about some things and kicking stuff around. And at the end, the spokesman for the group said, "Well I still don't like this, but if you were to do this, this could work." And we all just about fell over. It helped me to understand the issues better, how to best manage land that balances some of those uses…through just spending the time, getting to know people, listening to them. Basic things, but mostly the time. It's meeting after meeting, year after year, before you build that up. I've seen some instances where people that have been very outspoken, but then out on the ground and where it's more one-on-one and you're not writing emails, that when somebody has challenged some of these attitudes and said, "Now wait a minute. What do you mean by that?" All of a sudden they have backed off and went, "Oh, well, yeah, I can see that." The field trips worked. They were really getting work done on the ground. Those recreation guys were taking care of business. And these were guys with dirt bikes, and mountain bikes, and horses and feet and they were working together. So they had relationships for sure. That was a success.	We should have had a meeting every single month. Every single month, we should have had an opportunity to get together face-to-face…But without meeting face-to-face, we don't have the ability to build the trust that's necessary to get this hard work done. Then when we do meet, we don't get another meeting on the books…But I think that's one place where we've had a fatal flaw. A lot of my ability to participate was virtual…If I would have gone to 10 in person meetings as opposed to two or three, I probably would have maybe built some stronger relationships. But because of the way I interacted it was a little bit more removed from that ability to personally connect with one another. Because so much is lost, if you're not just in person.
Interim Decision-making	People were given time to speak and hear different voices. I think primarily in the meetings, and then we also had some sub-group meetings. Through those, we are able to dive into the weeds and really hear people's perspective and things. So yeah, I think there's good opportunity working within the collaborative to do that. We would have some smaller disagreements that we worked through. Some people might have one view and others a different view.	Forest Plan Revision is a high stakes endeavor and while everybody acknowledges an opportunity and a need, it's also a pressure cooker for a collaborative…There's a timeline on it, so you're trying to work on those timelines and get recommendations in versus these more grassroots projects where they're seeing the actual outcomes on the ground of that work, and that's much more rewarding than this thing that's a little more nebulous but also in a pressure cooker.

Shared Motivation		
Overall Shared Motivation	I was able to just relate a little bit more, knowing that a lot of the reasons why that group is going out into the landscape, is the same reasons I am going out into the landscape. We are looking to connect, in a similar way, just through different means. And so that was kind of eyeopening, and helped me relate with those people better. A sense of mutual interest in the issues…You kind of were like, "These are my people." You may not agree on everything, but we all... I mean, there was never a sense that anyone didn't care about the landscape. I mean, that's a big unifier. People love the country. If we had 30 people at a meeting, 29, no 27, were pulling in one direction, three were there for pet issues, or weren't truthful… Said they were going to collaborate, but had no intentions of collaborating.	What was unreasonable about it was the person expecting everyone else to be as impassioned about that one component of forest planning as they were. That's not a lot of people's expertise. There's history of distrust built up, of broken promises, of this and that. And when you get national initiatives put down in local communities, it can seem very foreign. One participant, their thing was a pet issue. That was their Boogie Man. They did a good job of listening to recreation proposals, but when you talked about their pet issue, their eyes glazed over and they turned from a reasonable human being into an idealogue.
Interpersonal trust	My relationship is good with a great many of them. The collaborative has allowed you to understand a little bit about them personally, where they come from and really what is their main interests. Our relationship is respectful… I never ever felt like people were unwilling to at least hear my voice. I always felt welcomed. I always felt like I could share. I tried to also have my ears turned on and make sure everyone had the same opportunity I did to have their perspective heard. I thought it was an incredibly welcoming and open environment. Mostly pretty good. If I have to say, I'd give it a 75% out of a 100. There's been some great relationships built. There were some individuals that I'd normally probably would have thought, oh man, we're probably going to butt heads on this, but I found them to be very	If you sit at the round table and talk about agreeing or working together on stuff, and in the back of your mind you are thinking, I'm going to blow this up at the end, then what are you doing there?...That was one of the real frustrating things with relationships is you did see some people blowing smoke. And at the end when it comes down to brass tacks, their true feelings about stuff came out. One participant recently told me, "We're not going to be able to do anything. There's no reason to stay in involved anymore. We're just sitting around and pushing paper. We can agree in a classroom or in the library at a meeting just to say we agree, but when it comes down and actually putting your name down on a document and sending it in for support, we can't do it. We're just sitting around singing kumbaya, acting like friends, and all of a sudden it blows up.

	professional. And I appreciated that.…I wanted to understand them. I really felt that if you really care about the resources, even you're on totally different ends, you can find some common ground.	
Process Legitimacy	I think that the Forest Service has given credibility to this process. Some of the people in our group also participate on the Grassroots Advisory, and I think that the more we show them that we're here to listen and we're here to build trust, the more credibility it gives to us. That we're value added, and I think we've done a really good job of doing that. What gives the Collaborative credibility is having that diversity of stakeholders and just the amount of time we spend into our work, which has never been a problem, and the quality of the work. There were also many, many side conversations with knowledgeable people that were outside of the collaborative that didn't want to engage because they didn't want to jump into a mess. But they still respected what we were doing…They were pretty supportive of what we were doing. They would agree with us that some of the shots we were taking were not accurate and were not fair.	The Forest Service has paid Salmon Valley Stewardship to manage the process. Then that refutes the comments that were made to us by senior management that the Collaborative was not the USFS' collaborative. And so how do you pay somebody who had a mission statement? They have ignored the Grassroots Advisory. They had their group and that was going to be the Collaborative that they were also funding. And so they were locked in, dialed in and I think it would what you would call corrupt. It was pre decisional…Anybody that significantly altered that pre decision was marginalized if not canceled.
Commitment	We have a group of people who came into this as volunteers, because they were concerned, and the common interest was to do the right thing and to be willing to work through the process with the Forest Service. And I think just in having that common goal and that we all came to the table in good faith has been what's made it work, so far. The idea of being able to have a variety of people together that came in with a common interest of doing something this way was going to be kind of refreshing, different, productive, any of those things. I think I went into it with that idea and then it's changed some, but I mean, it's still there.	It also comes back to if people are willing to have conversations and we're going to just be on polar like hard opposites without having some of those conversations to get over those hurdles, then it probably doesn't seem like worth people's time, right?...If there's some doors that are closed because of too many suspicions. I think getting over those, there's ways to but again, you've got to have people that are willing to show up to have those conversations.

Capacity for Joint Action		
Leadership	It was especially thanks to the facilitators that it was a comfortable environment to participate in. The facilitator, they're really key…I thought our facilitators did a great job of keeping us on task and pointing us in the right direction, things like that. I felt like the facilitator had a tall task in orchestrating all of this stuff. And I feel like they did a really good job of trying to keep all these moving separate pieces and different groups, moving towards the goal and holding people accountable, mostly. I thought the facilitator did a really good job trying to herd the cats, did a great job of that. I think they gave it their best effort and largely successful in getting a broad range of stakeholders. They did a lot of stuff really, really great. I think they treated everyone with respect. They engaged the Forest Service in a way that was constructive. They always gave us notice. We never felt like we were floating around, at least not because of anything they did…So for the most part, I think they did awesome. The one thing I wish they had done a little more was, been a little more assertive in pushing us to come out with something. They were a little bit like, "Well, we're the facilitator. You guys have to work that out yourself."… But that'd be my only really thing I think they could have done better, is that. Otherwise, I thought they did excellent. The facilitators tried to put the onus on the collaborative members, but I think that responsibility started to land on the facilitators because people barely had enough time as it was to get to these meetings and to participate. So again, it came back to that, well, the facilitators have that funding, they have that capacity. So they will take that on.	I would say her communication skills were adequate for the job. But if you are the facilitator, you cannot be locked into a position and do an adequate job. Because the facilitator is supposed to bring out the discussion to allow the group. And if you can't do that, you need to step down and let somebody else facilitate. I would shoot for more of a moderator/facilitator type group that was from outside the area that specialized in moderating and facilitating. It would almost be better if they didn't specialize in natural resources, because then they would have no desire to push anything one way or the other. They did a great job, but, they're not trained facilitators. They're organizers. So when our group got in the weeds on stuff, they helped keep us together…but, a trained facilitator, somebody in from the outside, no ties to the community, no expectations, nothing the other side could build a soap opera out of. Our facilitators were more management consultants. They'll tell us what to do and then we should go do it. Or that if we have a meeting and say, well, you can't do that. That's not what the Forest Service wants, what they want is this…And so there was this tension like that, and I personally I didn't feel that, that's not what the facilitator is supposed to do. Facilitator is supposed to help the group, not tell the group what they have to do. There were very few people who were actually in touch with people in the Forest Service. So it was the facilitator who was the go-between... When four people got together [for a working group], the facilitator would be there to facilitate those four people talking together, which I found a little strange.

Structure	Our working groups are working, in my opinion, even though I've been frustrated at times, our working groups are working really well together. We've been able to reach consensus over things that I was afraid we would never reach consensus over or on. And I've seen a lot more success with our working groups than I've seen with the overall collaborative. The Collaborative was very organized. Out of all the groups that I've been a part of, they're the single most organized, structured, collaborative. So I'm actually taking what I've learned from those guys into other collaboratives. People wanted a formal structure and they wanted some commitment from people that, if you missed a certain amount of meetings, it was on you to catch up or else you would step out…And we had heard from the first round of meetings, we need to make it manageable. So that's where we started coming up with those segments. And..that would it make sense to have a one person or three people or whatever from each segment that actually gave the thumbs up or the thumbs down? I think it's a really good rule, and I kind of wish it was applied in more places, that if you don't like something, you got to come up with an alternative and say, "This is what I would do." And that really forces somebody who disagrees to not just say, "No, no, no," all the time, and explain why you don't like it. That's a big one. And actually holding people to that, I thought we did a pretty good job of…	There was a lot of concern with the voting structure and how that was set up from the very beginning. I think that a number of people, that left a sour taste in their mouths directly from the start and felt that they weren't having a voice, were a true collaborative. Everybody should be talking and everybody should have a voice. But if only certain people are voting, then they felt that only those people truly had the vote. So, there was that. And so I indicated to them, as well as a bunch of other people, that I had an objection, as well as a few others had objection. And that we're not going to participate if you're in the position where everybody that has a vote, it was already opposed to you. I did not care for the very formal structure, the kind of the membership titles, the seeming exclusivity of it. It rubbed people the wrong way right off the bat, and they didn't recover from that. They did it in such a way that seemed to exclude people. And this was one of the reasons why that that other collaborative group was formed because they felt that they didn't have, and there was no way they could have a voice. And just that that term voting, non voting, that blew up ... We changed it. I can't remember what we changed it to but it was too late.
Resources	The Collaborative seems to have a lot of financial support and a paid mediator. It is very structured. There is no other collaborative group similar that I'm a part of.	
Knowledge	I think we had a lot of the right people in the room, people who have spent a lot of time working on thinking on these issues,	

	and a lot of different types of experience. I thought we had a lot of really, really smart and experienced people in the room. I do. We had the capacity to do our own thing. We could provide our own information, we could develop our own recommendations that related back into the issues the forest had already pointed out.	

Table A4.2. Evidence supporting and not supporting the main Outputs and Outcomes of the Collaborative. The quotes were selected from interview transcripts to be representative of the range of dominant perspectives reported by interviewees. As stated for Table A4.1, the number of quotes is not intended to provide a quantitative analysis of which perspectives were dominant.

Description	Quotes supporting	Quotes not supporting
Outputs		
Assessment and Needs for Change Comments	The comments were incredibly helpful. Their comments were really, really substantial. We were the envy of the Forest Service, what was happening, the type of products we were getting. Other forests couldn't believe that we were so lucky.	But they put in so much work on recommendations around the assessment. I don't know if the Forest Service ever utilized that for anything. It was such good information and just quality recommendations….I think they were using it a lot more than we realized and I was hearing that offline. But they were terrified to say it out loud or in writing…But they just could not tie anything to us at the end. It was like we were hearing in back alleys like, that was great and we're going to use it.
Desired Future Conditions	Coming out with a fairly broad set of recommendations, the description of the Desired Future Conditions to give back to the forest, I thought that was huge. From everything from forest health things, to lands, to grazing. I think that the fact that we	

	put that together as a group is significant. I thought the recreation groups' Desired Future Conditions were really good… I think they were representative of the intent of the group. I thought they hit the sweet spot, where they were cognizant of all the issues, yet still took a position that was fairly thoughtful. I mean, it wasn't any earth shattering stuff. The grazing community did good stuff. Recreation did good stuff. It was all just overshadowed.	
Wild and Scenic River Suitability Proposal	If we were just going stand-alone, we probably would have come to a bigger list of rivers. But I'd rather have a slightly smaller list that a whole big group or a collaborative group feels good about than a bigger list that just we feel good about, because I think more likely to get more conservation gains from the other way. The wild and scenic exercise was a good exercise. They went through the Forest Service's lists of wild and scenic eligible streams, which was huge…I believe that that product will probably be dug out of a file again at some point and used. So, even if it sits there for a couple of years or five or 10 years, that's a product that's going to be useful in the future. So, that was a good one. One product in particular that I think continues to be a standout was just their Wild and Scenic River…That was a process that I thought was innovative. It was incredibly useful. I think, again, if things hadn't gotten so crazy, we would have just adopted that process. It would have saved a lot of time, and money, and heartache. I think it is very, very interesting because our Collaborative came up with a wild and scenic rivers proposal that would have pleased the most conservative of conservative voices. We were really leery of adding new wild and scenic designations and we largely didn't do it.. We did excellent work.	
Sawmill Canyon Recreation Project	There's going to be a sawmill trails project	The people that said no [to the

	on the mountain, in Sawmill Canyon. Is that solving the world's ills? No. But, we're going to protect some fish. We're going to add some opportunity for some other users. We're going to spread the users out, and we're going to take care of the fish by building stream crossings so that we can get rid of the silt problems. That came out of the collaboration. That's what you get out of collaboration. The project changed due to the collaborative group. Improving the non-motorized access on some of the trailer hunting and sportsman concerns or one gentleman brought up access for fire crews if they get dropped in on a helitack.…The fishery concerns. Bridging some of the creek crossings. Lower sedimentation in some of the critical habitat streams for various fisheries. Mitigation on some of the wildlife areas winter range where people are just willy-nilly going out there and cutting firewood where they shouldn't be.	Sawmill Canyon Proposal] haven't been involved for over 18 months. They came out of the shadows and throwing up "no" votes, and it was just like, "Well, where have you been for the last 18 months? You weren't even in this process….It was just about the time where things were really starting to fall apart and people were getting burnt out…Everybody could see the train was heading off the tracks and just weren't sure if they should really continue to push it forward or anything. The CIPLC initiated the idea to try and come up with a project and we came up with Sawmill Canyon and even though they don't want to be part of it, it's moving forward.
Outcomes		
Perceived Performance	I thought a lot of our work was top-notch. I felt like it was thoughtful, and I thought it was balanced to the whole group's interest. I think the biggest impact was, probably creating our recommendations to the forest. I mean, I was there in the room that day, and it felt cool. It felt powerful. It felt like we had done something. I wish there would have been a little bit more clarity in how the output and products that the collaborative did create would be used. I think we did a good job on doing things for the Forest Plan. We maybe didn't do as good a job in dealing with the public relations-aspect of it, as we could have. I think we felt like we did provide very detailed strong input to the Forest Service. Without them, until they restart the plan, it's hard to know how that input is actually incorporated, which would be one metric to	We spent a million hours on this very detailed input, and it's like basically get no feedback back from the Forest Service of like, "Oh, this was really helpful. Oh, this wasn't helpful, we did this, we did that." It just kind of went into the void a bit. So I think that was a source of frustration for members of the collaborative.

	measure the success of the collaborative by.	
Participant Satisfaction	My satisfaction was fairly good because what it made me do, is think outside of the box and bring other people in. It created a lot of networking and interaction on other projects with other groups because we know who does what now and get involved. So a couple of us out of this Collaborative have worked together on other projects. There were times when I was really satisfied with my personal growth in what I perceived as the growth of all of the members. I think moving towards each other, in both understanding and perspective and opinion. I do think that you had like a buckshot pattern when we started, and I think it grew closer together. That's what I was pleased with.	I was not pleased with things that were occurring outside of the collaborative that undermined the collaborative. That was incredibly frustrating. In the end I wasn't satisfied at all. I felt like it was a tremendous amount of work and I don't really feel that anything came about of it. … I was dissatisfied with the Forest side of things. I believe that the way the Forest moved forward with the plan helped drive some of the division... My expectations have changed very dramatically over time. I think I had much higher hopes of having some of the hard conversations that would lead to maps or areas that would improve not only conservation, but what can we do to help the economy and what areas are important for recreation... It's been a reality check that three years in, we're talking about the big picture, pie in the sky desired future conditions. So I have to adjust my expectations in what I will be able to achieve because we're moving at a pace that feels glacial. I think that there was a really strong effort at the kickoff to try and make the collaborative the full voice of the people who were interested in forest plan revision…. Then I think the pressures from things outside of the collaborative really derailed the forest plan revision. It made the collaborative much less effective than it could have been, but just don't know that it would

		have turned out any other way if you would have changed any of the variables.
Shared Learning - Cognitive	It really provided a forum for people who are interested in the forests, and in public lands in general in our geographic areas, to become a little bit more knowledgeable and well-rounded in terms of all of the things that public lands are expected to do. So, if you had a river guide participating in our collaborative, that river guide might've come into the process not knowing anything about minerals, or anything about wildfire, or anything about bike trails…Everyone left with a much better and more well-rounded understanding of the broad pressures and the diverse users of our national forest. I think that's a good thing. I think that encourages understanding of each other, and hopefully that leads to less conflict and more progress on problem-solving. I definitely had a paradigm shift on that. I probably could have had lots more too, but that was a definite light bulb moment for me that I was very glad that I had. And sometimes it really opened my eyes. It's like, okay, I'm okay with that. I didn't realize it, but it's like, okay, that makes sense…I was impressed by other people's level of professionalism and the information. I also think it was a great learning opportunity for a lot of people to understand about the forest plan…And I understand how the forest planning process works, which is obviously a great help when they actually do it…So the education was a huge success. What an opportunity for the USFS to hear these discussions, to hear what's important to us. And to begin internalizing this as their own comments. I always thought of this whole process as kind of a continuing conversation about what we want the Upper Salmon to look like, that the forest planning process is kind	One of the key issues is unpacking the complexity of forest planning. That conundrum, how to do that, is something we never solved. I think that there was a level of excitement, there was motivation, there was some commitment when we got started two and a half, almost three years ago. And yet in some ways, I don't know that we're very much further than where we were, in part, because I think of this disconnect between different social groups.

	of a surrogate for that…Even though the process has been bogged down, those conversations are still going. And the best thing the collaborative did was really spur those to happen. I firmly believe that. It wasn't necessarily any single piece of content that we put out. It was that these conversations crystallized around the formation of the collaborative and kept going, and revealed the sort of cracks in the community and revealed certain things about the Forest Service that highlighted some of the problems that are going on, on the public lands. And those need to be discussed…We can still continue the conversation about what we want the community to look like. That's the most important thing that we did, I think. I definitely learned more about fire and the timber industry that I didn't know before. But I didn't feel that anything changed my opinion or the viewpoint from where I was coming from. I learned a tremendous amount about Wild and Scenic Rivers and their designations and what that actually means.	
Shared Learning - Relational	It's definitely some of the work relationships I've appreciated the most, some ones I've built through that collaborative, both through working together in the trenches on some of this, but also just going out on field trips together, getting beers together, things like that, just getting to know people you wouldn't always interact with in your normal circles. I would say it was a good experience and good opportunity to build those relationships. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to build these relationships…I'm having the opportunity to sit down with people who would have never sat down two years ago in the same room and listened to me and felt like we're on the same side. It's been a phenomenal opportunity and it's been 100% worth my investment to work with people	I can't really say that I have a strong relationship with anyone in the group. But I feel like we all respected each other, and each other's opinions. So, that is a great place from which to build strong relationships, but no. I don't really have any of those. I don't feel like I have any of those, from being in the group.

	who might be known as anti-enviros or not having the same goals. That was kind of a nice thing from working the collaborative was realizing all these people had your back. There was still a couple people on the collaborative e-mail list that were basically in the Grassroots Advisory, and not really participating in the Collaborative, but just trying to drop bombs in there when certain things were presented or sent out. And it's nice to feel like other people, not just the conservation groups or whatever, that had your back. I think some of my personal satisfaction is, some of the connections that were made, even though the collaborative is not working right now, these folks are still working together. They're doing stuff and they are working on rural development pieces... There's still a lot being achieved, even though it's not around forest plan revision because that's been put on hold. I had on three occasions after those meetings, people from, who I had not met before, who were part of Grassroots Advisory, come up and say, "Hey, what you're saying is totally right. I didn't know what you guys were talking about, and it's interesting to hear what you say. I don't agree necessarily with this shutting down the process, and I don't necessarily agree with this idea that you guys are outside interests but I had never met you guys. And so we were concerned. And now that I talked with you, maybe we don't agree on everything, but we're largely on the same page."	